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XXXIX

THE KUSASE

Tribal and Clan Organization. The Tenedan'

THE Kusase are a large tribe, numbering over 40,000, which inhabits the extreme north-eastern corner of the Northern Territories. They also extend across the border into the mandated territory of Togoland. The people call themselves *Kusase*, singular *Kusa*, and their language *Kusal*.[1] Specimens of this dialect have been given in previous chapters. They do not apply the name Gurense to themselves as do the Nankanse.

Clans: The word used in the vernacular is *budi*. A son acquires the clan of his father. Here, for the first time, we encounter a departure from the more common practice of using the totem name to designate the clan. A Kusa, if asked his clan, will give the name, not of its totem, but of the male ancestor from whom all his fellow-clansmen trace descent. On inquiring further, he will then state what is his clan taboo. This departure from the usual practice will also be noted later on among the Lobi. Here again, we find particular clans grouped in certain towns, town again having the meaning of 'area' or 'settlement' rather than township in the commonly accepted sense. The following table illustrates the above.

Town.	*Clan.*	*Clan Taboo.*
Gagbir.[2]	Zuos.	*Waf tetaa* (lit. big snake i.e. python).
Garu.	Nabt.	*Sur.* (The heart of any animal).
Kugri.	Nabt.	*Sur.* (The heart of any animal).
Timpale.	Nabt.	*Tunig* (a kind of fish with sharp teeth).
Pusig.	Zuos.	Python.

The towns of Bindur, Bugur, Zabuk, Timpan, Bawk' also contain a number of Zuos clansmen. Bawk (Bawku)[3] are really Mampruse, not

[1] Kusal is so much like Mole that an officer learned the former language by mistake for the latter and was duly examined by a language board and passed, much to the amusement of critics of the said board. They had, however, every excuse for doing so, the laugh really being against those who, because these languages had different names, thought they were not related. Curiously enough, however, Kusase and Moshi do not intermarry (see p. 390).

[2] *Anglice* Kagbiri.

[3] The *Tenedan'* is, however, a Zuos.

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Kusase, being founded by the ruling class. Timoni, another settlement, now included among and talking Kusal, are really Buls' (Builsa).

My informants stated that the Nabt of Kugri, who taboo the heart of an animal, and the Nabt of Timpale, who taboo a fish, formerly did not intermarry but now do so. I was also informed that at Pusig' there is a clan (?) called Narem whose totem is *naf zur* (a cow tail), but that these people, though now talking Kusal, were formerly Bimoba.

From the above it would appear that we had here among the Kusase, two endogamous clans, Zuos and Nabt, a third having been lately added by the breaking away of a branch of the former which had acquired a sub-totem, i.e. the fish, while other clans which may be found in this area are those introduced by the influx of other tribes, Bimoba, Builsa, and Mampruse. In other words, there are signs of the dual organization having existed there. Proof of this supposition must, however, await a fuller and more minute investigation. A parallel to this will, as we shall see later, be found among a neighbouring tribe, the Tampolense (see Chapter LVI).

The blood-related kindred-groups found among the Nankanse, &c., also exist here, being known as *sog*. Again we find the taint of witchcraft transmitted only down this line. 'If your mother "cannot see", if your mother is "blind", all her descendants through the female line are also blind. This relationship is called *sog*. *Soe* is a witch. To "see" is a bad thing. In old days if we found a witch we wanted to tie him up and beat him until he died. You cannot leave a person who is eating people; he will spoil the world. As the Elders sit and converse at night, they will see a fire flickering *ta ta ta* at some compound, and when some one dies, the *baa* (soothsayer) will find out that there is a witch in that compound. Many people can "see" but do not eat people. The children of witches are the beautiful women whom men love the most. In olden times when a witch killed your child or "brother" you would want to kill him, but others would beg you to forgive him.'

Traditions of the Kusase: 'When the Mampruse came from Gambaga, they found us here. In old days we only knew *Tenedan'* and had no *Na* (Territorial Ruler). We have always been here. Even when we move about in the locality and overtake some other people, we sacrifice to the land. *Tenedan' da moro ti* (the *Tenedan'* had us), we did not know what is now called *Nam* (Chieftainship). When anything happened, we all met and gave him (the *Tenedan'*) things to sacrifice and thus gained life and grain. The *Tenedan'* had power; when any one refused to obey him he would strike the land (*nwe tey*) and that person would

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deceased's senior wife (the eldest son's maternal uncle) because a man's senior wife owns the compound and has all the work of building it up. During a man's lifetime, the eldest son may not look into his father's bag or into his grain-store, or make use of anything personally used by his father.'[1]

Widows and Children: 'Widows go to the heir, but if he does not want them, they will know this, and already have spoken to the men whom they wish to marry. Before their heads have been shaved, they must not on any account have sexual intercourse with any one. Any man who is guilty of doing so, is said "to have cut the widows' strings" (*okoa pɔkɔ nwis*) and any infant whom such an adulterer looks upon will die. These widows' strings are made by an old woman who has ceased to bear children, and, after the funeral custom, she will cut them. After this they will appear in fresh leaves and people will know they are eligible to remarry. They will marry a clansman, not some one from another town. A son may not marry any of his father's widows if the father has ever had sexual intercourse with them. The deceased's brother, if not a *nyere*, may do so. The leaves which widows wear are *tanpiba* leaves (shea butter leaves). If a wife ever puts these on (during his lifetime) her husband will divorce her, and claim back the cows.[2]

'If the widow goes outside the clan of the late husband to marry, the heir will claim from her parents the cows paid, but deducting one cow for each child borne by her. Her father in turn will recover these cows from the man whom she then marries. The children then remain with the late husband's family. Should all the cows not have been paid when the first husband died, the heir, or whichever of the clansmen take her, have to pay the balance due, otherwise no new payments are necessary. It is taboo for the heir to take for himself two widows of the same man. He chooses which he will have and gives the other to his brother, that is, if these persons want them, otherwise they may marry a clansman.' Other customs in connexion with widows and the funeral custom will be dealt with under that heading.

Children: 'The children of the deceased belong to his fellow clansman who marries the widow, but across the Volta, among the Kusase whom we call the people of the West (*Toondem*), children of widows belong to the ghost (i.e. the late husband). If the widow marries outside her late husband's clan, any children she had by her first husband remain the property of his clansman, i.e. of the heir.'

[1] Compare the Nankanse.

[2] Compare Nankanse custom.

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553 776 778 head and the python skull were placed on the shrine that was eventually consecrated to the *bakologo* spirit and my informant's name was a reference to the arrow head. One of *his* sons taken in guardianship by the same shrine was named WAAFO, snake.

[775] This case is interesting from another angle, too. The Tallensi have no belief in reincarnation. There is no special bond between a person and his ancestral namesake. He is not supposed to resemble or expected to emulate his ancestor. His name is a display of pride in ancestry, on the one hand, and a sign of submission to the religious supremacy of the ancestors, on the other. Thus he has no special ritual observances, on account of his name, if he is the ward of a patrilineal ancestor.

● [614] But if his *seyor* is a matrilateral ancestor, this person might have belonged to a clan different from his own. In that case he is often obliged to keep the totemic taboos of the clan of this ancestor. Thus in the above case it is not altogether an accident that the slain python turned out to be a manifestation of a matrilateral ancestor whose clan have a taboo against killing and eating this animal. Children taken in spirit-guardianship by this ancestor have therefore to observe the same taboo, whether or not it is followed by other members of their family and clan.

553 776 I do not want to follow further the complex ramifications of this aspect of Tale naming customs. One more detail must suffice. The greatest renown, that is the most respected *wu'uri*, comes from election to an office. A chief (*Na'ab*) or Custodian of the Earth (*Tendaana*) is always addressed and referred to by his title. After his death he is certain to have descendants through his sons, grandsons, and daughters, placed under his spiritual guardianship. They will be named either by the name he took to himself on election to his office, which I shall describe presently, or by his title. NA'AB, NA'ABPOK, TENDAANA, etc. are common names among descendants of such dignitaries.

And here it is pertinent to add that certain forms of disgrace which are associated with ritual danger result in the suppression of ancestral names. Thus if a man dies of smallpox, or is killed in war, his name is never given to a descendant. He will be remembered in sacrifices if he has descendants but not in their names.

551 553 I want to turn now to the open names. Their variety is extraordinary. A few refer to accidental or conventional circumstances connected with the birth of the bearer and are therefore fairly frequent. ZIBA, knows not father, is the name always given to a posthumous child. SAMANE, the home farm, is a common name. It is given to a child whose mother was overcome by labour pains while engaged on some task on the home farm. SUOR, path, has the same origin. TAMPOYAR, the garbage heap, may be the name given to a child born after the onset of labour pains at the ash heap. But it also arises in this way. A woman has had several children all of whom have died soon after birth. This is failure or malevolence on the part of the various ancestors who claimed these children as wards. When her next child is born the father says: "I give this child's life to be watched over by the garbage heap. My ancestors have failed me, for all that my children are good for is to be buried (as babies that die are so buried) in the garbage heap." This is a well tried magical idea, found also elsewhere in West Africa and in many other parts of the world.